

Physical activity guidelines for

OLDER ADULTS (65+ YEARS)



1. Older adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and cognitive function. Some physical activity is better than none, and more physical activity provides greater health benefits.
2. Older adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.
3. For those who are already regularly active at moderate intensity, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.
4. Older adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week.
5. Older adults at risk of falls should incorporate physical activity to improve balance and co-ordination on at least two days a week.
6. All older adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Moderate intensity physical activities will cause older adults to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they should still be able to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Ballroom dancing

Vigorous intensity physical activities will cause older adults to get warmer and breathe much harder and their hearts to beat rapidly, making it more difficult to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Climbing stairs
- Running

Physical activities that strengthen muscles involve using body weight or working against a resistance. This should involve using all the major muscle groups. Examples include:

- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries
- Activities that involve stepping and jumping such as dancing
- Chair aerobics

Activities to improve balance and co-ordination may include:

- Tai chi
- Yoga

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV
- Taking regular walk breaks around the garden or street
- Breaking up sedentary time such as swapping a long bus or car journey for walking part of the way

What are the benefits of being active daily?

- Helps maintain cognitive function
- Reduces cardiovascular risk
- Helps maintain ability to carry out daily living activities
- Improves mood and can improve self-esteem
- Reduces the risk of falls

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)